

Remarks
(as written)
of
Ambassador David Huebner

on the Occasion
of the
234th Anniversary of American Independence Day

July 2, 2010
Intercontinental Hotel, Wellington

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou, katoa.

Ministers of the Government of New Zealand Gerry Brownlee, Dr. Wayne Mapp, Georgina Te Heu Heu, Simon Power, Heather Roy, Tony Ryall, and Peter Dunne; Attorney General Chris Finlayson, colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps.; distinguished Members of Parliament; distinguished members of the academic, faith, legal, philanthropic, business, and public service communities; friends all:

Thank you for coming out this evening to celebrate the American National Day – in the dead of the Wellington winter, in the middle of the school holiday, with Parliament out of session, and on a Friday night, a perfect storm of factors that might tempt the most generous of souls to simply stuff the invitation. I'm delighted that you didn't.

I would also like to thank my friends from Aotea College – the students in *The Academy* and *The Fource* performance groups – for uplifting us with their presence, passion, and talent. The most accurate reflection of the soul of any nation is its young people, and *The Academy* and *The Fource* are superb ambassadors for the people of NZ.

In large part as a result of my conversations with the several hundred students whom I have met across this wonderful country, I know that the People of New Zealand are vibrant, dynamic, talented, warm-hearted, optimistic, ambitious, willful, feisty, no-nonsense. They say what they think. They ask questions. They are respectfully skeptical. They are fundamentally fair.

Those same words and phrases also nicely and accurately describe the People of the United States. To me that is why the relationship between our two Peoples is, has been, and always will be strong.

Our two Peoples are cut from similar cloth.

At the most basic level, we are each heterogeneous amalgams founded on and held together by Hope, Opportunity, and Choice. We do not fear Diversity. We do not simply tolerate it. We embrace it.

We are both assertive Peoples. We have a tendency toward strong opinions. We believe we are entitled to voice those opinions. In fact, we occasionally display an annoying certainty that we know better than everyone else.

And, of course, we both make mistakes. When we make mistakes, however, the impulse of our Peoples is not to cover up but to correct. To hold accountable. To improve. Even when it's painful or long overdue, we ultimately attempt to put things right. We each not only tolerate hard questions, self-reflection, debate, protest, and opposition – but depend on it to renew our vitality and integrity.

Both our Peoples are usually quick to recognize the difference between spin and reality. Between misdirection and candor. Between what is fundamental, and what is not.

Although we of course value economic activities, our Peoples don't measure character by the volume of our exports, but by the strength and courage of our convictions. We understand that friendship is not bought and sold, and that kinship is not measured in dollars and cents. Our ideals and core values are not the product of low bidding or value-for-money analysis.

Whatever respective governments of the day might do on occasion, our two Peoples do not avert their eyes or hold their tongues for financial gain or economic advantage. We do not easily excuse oppression or human misery just because it happens to be profitable or convenient to do so. Kiwis and Yanks are hewn from stronger timber than that.

Our Peoples do not shy from difficult endeavors or sacrifice. Our respective national characters were tempered in fire – like steel – at places such as Gallipoli and

Normandy. Our soldiers have stood together shoulder-to-shoulder under fire at Monte Cassino, at Guadalcanal, in Korea, and in Vietnam – as well as on the shores of Aotearoa when the Kiwi homeland was threatened with attack. We must not forget those shared sacrifices – and why our Peoples were willing to share them – even as the generations who made them inevitably pass to their final reward.

Our service men and women continue to work together to make the world a safer, more secure, and more prosperous place for everyone – including the People of Afghanistan.

Kiwis and Yanks are both not only tough but adventurous Peoples, epitomized by Sir Edmund Hilary first climbing to the highest perch on Earth, and by Neil Armstrong first stepping onto the surface of Earth's Moon.

We are both inventive Peoples, epitomized by Sir Ernest Rutherford's ground-breaking nuclear research, and by Thomas Edison's production of the phonograph, kinetoscope, and household electric light bulb.

In the most basic sense – at the sub-atomic level, if you will – Kiwis and Yanks are innately comfortable with each other, as evidenced by the large numbers of Americans who have chosen to live and work here ... and by the iconic Kiwis who have chosen to build lives and careers in the United States. Those include, just to name a few, the late Sir William Pickering, former head of NASA and a long-time Calif. Resident; Sir Peter Snell, one of NZ's greatest Olympians and a long-time Texas resident; Scott Dixon, of Indianapolis 500 fame; director Roger Donaldson; and actress Anna Paquin, among many others.

Finally, I note that we are both Free Peoples. Our instinct toward freedom creates a gravitational attraction between us. Simply put, we do not view liberty as a perk to be rationed out by governments as suits their convenience.

Despite security and economic challenges that inevitably arise, I believe that our two Peoples still share the view ... first articulated by an American 234 years ago this weekend, on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia ...

- that all humans – not just Yanks and Kiwis – are endowed with certain unalienable rights including Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness,
- that governments are instituted by and among humans specifically to

secure – not abridge – such rights,

- that governments should only hold such power as granted to them by the express consent of those governed,
- and that citizens have an inherent right to change the composition and form of their government as they see fit.

Thus, on the occasion of American Independence Day – in an increasingly complex but paradoxically over-simplified world – I am delighted to state, with full confidence and candor ...

- that relations between the governments of New Zealand and the United States are stronger, warmer, and closer than they have been in decades,
- that our citizens and corporations trade, invest, and travel across our respective borders with extraordinary prodigiosity,
- that our two nations stand shoulder to shoulder on key issues that matter most on this planet,
- that our two societies continue to share core civil values – and continue to learn from each other – despite the ever-present corrosive risk of political and economic expediency,
- and, most importantly, from what Dr. McWaine and I have been privileged to experience over my first 7 months in this wonderful country, that our two Peoples continue to share the affection, mutual respect, and common values and aspirations that mark true kinship worth celebrating, honoring, and preserving.

Kati ake i konei. Ma te Atua koutou e manaaki.

Thank you.

